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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

4 November 1958

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MEMORANDUM FOR [redacted]

SUBJECT: DISCOVERY Program

1. Attached is a draft copy of answers and questions for possible use in conjunction with an ARPA press release on the DISCOVERY program.

2. Inclosure, or something similar to it, would be made available to public information people at ARPA, DOD, Air Force Headquarters, ARDC, BMD and Vandenberg as guidance in answering questions which are expected to grow out of the DISCOVERY release.

3. I am furnishing a copy to Mr. Lind of ARPA.

[redacted]

GLEN W. CLARK
Colonel, USAF
Assistant Director of
Information Services

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NRO and USAF review(s) completed.

Question: Is the discovery a reconnaissance satellite?

Answer: No.

Question: Is it part of the WS-117L program?

Answer: No. Originally, the use of a THOR booster was envisaged as part of a future reconnaissance project but this was separated and assigned by ARPA directive to the Discovery series. In effect, this enabled ARPA to accelerate the Discovery project.

Question: If the Discovery is not part of the WS-117L program and if it is not a reconnaissance satellite, will it make a contribution to a reconnaissance satellite program?

Answer: Ultimately, the Discovery, like any satellite that achieves an orbital capacity, could be expected to make a contribution to a reconnaissance satellite program. However, reconnaissance satellites, as such, are still in the research stage and must, of necessity, be considered in terms of a future development.

Question: How many Discovery launchings will be attempted?

Answer: As yet, no precise number has been established. Because of the nature and variety of the experiments involved and the fact that some will orbit for short periods of time, it is expected that a considerable number will be launched.

Question: Why is DISCOVERY being placed in a polar orbit?

Answer: Polar orbit is the only one possible from Vandenberg AFB with hardware presently available. Eastward launch from Vandenberg is prevented by safety considerations. Launch to the west would entail an unacceptable speed penalty.

Question: Why is a low altitude orbit being used?

Answer: High altitudes are not possible with the weight-thrust ratio established for the DISCOVERY.

Question: Why not launch the DISCOVERY from Cape Canaveral?

Answer: The facilities at Cape Canaveral are overloaded. One of the purposes in constructing a missile range on the West Coast was to reduce the burden on the Atlantic Range.

Question: What is the weight of the DISCOVERY satellite?

Answer: It is heavier than any satellite previously launched by the United States. No further detail can be given at this time.

Question: How many stages does the launch vehicle have and of what does each stage consist?

Answer: The main stage is a modified Thor IRBM. The second stage is a new vehicle developed by Lockheed. It is powered by a Bell-Hustler engine. The second stage vehicle, after burn out, will orbit as an integral part of the satellite.

NOTE: Any further questions should be deferred or referred to DOD as appropriate.